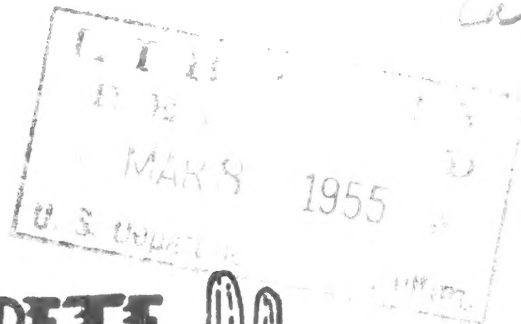


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HINTS ON THE CARE OF EPIPHYLLUMS





EPIPHYLLUMS are better known as "Cactus Orchids" because of their epiphytic habit of growing in the jungle trees of the tropics, and, although they are genuine cactus, they grow best when treated more like the begonia, camillia or fern.

Every commercial dealer has his own pet formula for soil, water and general treatment of these plants but we find that the very things which are fine for the commercial grower can often prove stumbling blocks for the beginner . . . for instance, both the use of peat moss and fertilizer have caused the loss of too many plants for the amateur. These are fine for the experienced grower who knows just how well-rotted the manure may be and who can tell just when to water his plants . . . long experience has been his teacher, but most beginners overwater . . . the peat-moss holds the excess water, the soil becomes too acid . . . the plants rot at the base. Also, many cuttings are lost, trying to root in too much, or too rich, a manure mixture. This may burn the tender roots back as fast as they develop.

Growing in the wild, in clumps of moss or other decayed plant, materials caught in the branches of the jungle trees, thru which the air circulates freely, they need extremely loose, well-drained soil. They like moisture but not saturation. All excess water must drain away at once so that soil will not become too acid. They are only semi-acid plants. They grow best in tin or wooden containers. It is best to put drain-holes in the outside near the base of containers as holes on the underside are easily plugged up. Then, when clay pots are used, it is best to place each pot on 2 small sticks of wood, leaving the drain-hole open for air circulation to the root system. Clay pots dry out more quickly, so will need more frequent watering. The plants do not like to be completely dry at any time.

We have made many experiments since our first Commercial Epiphyllum Show in 1933, and we believe that the best soil is made up of equal parts good Garden Loam, leaf-mould and coarse building sand with a generous amount of charcoal added. This will do nicely for the first year. From then on the plants should be given extra food. A well-rotted manure may be put around them or a liquid food may be used. Occasional blood meal or bone meal proves beneficial. Animal fertilizer placed in the bottom of the can will not harm the plants.

Old growth always makes the best cuttings, as the stronger the central woody stem, the sturdier will be the new plant. A long cutting is stronger and blooms more quickly than a short one. *All cuttings* should *lay to dry* for from one to two weeks. The thicker the cutting the longer it must dry. It is best to dry them slowly in a cool, shady place as this forms a very tough scar-tissue which is rot resistant. Plant cuttings about 1½" deep, being careful not to bruise them in any way. The strongest roots are formed when cuttings are watered very sparingly for the first month.

If rooted cuttings are purchased, it is generally safer to start them in a very dry soil mixture, withhold moisture for about three days, then water very sparingly until they show signs of being re-established. This will prevent the rotting which so often follows their transplanting.

Whenever it is necessary to re-pot an adult plant, the soil around the plant should be completely dry first. The new soil should also be dry. Take out the plant, separate it if needed, trim back the roots or partly remove the old soil. Replant it in the same size container for best blooms. Withhold water for a week, then water sparingly until re-established. By this method the plant will not be harmed or rot, as a dry plant *cannot* rot.

These plants need some sunshine, but will produce lovely flowers in shade where there is an abundance of reflected light. They are always a semi-shade plant.

